GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:735
ANSWERED ON:06.12.2004
ILLEGAL FELLING OF SANDALWOOD TREES
Madhwaraj Smt. Manorama

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware that illegal felling of sandalwood trees in Marayoor range in Kerala has been rampant and leading to illicit sandalwood oil distillation in Pallakkad district in Kerala ;

(b) if so, the details thereof ;

(c) whether the forest officials of Pallakkad (Kerala) have recently raided a few distillation units using illegal stocks of sandalwood ;

(d) if so, the outcome thereof ;

(e) whether any investigation is being conducted on the reported theft of sandalwood from Marayoor high range for clandestine use by distillation units in Pallakkad ; and

(f) if so, the details thereof ?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA)

(a) Yes, Sir. The Government is aware of the illegal felling of sandalwood trees in Marayoor Range. There have been a number of cases of illicit sandalwood distillation units functioning in Pallakkad using the illicitly felled material from Marayoor.

(b) There have been 907 number of Offence cases involving felling of 3608 sandalwood trees during the last five years.

(c) Yes, Sir. A raid was conducted on 10.10.2004 by a team of forest officers led by the Vigilance wing of the Department and a few factories were raided. Prior to this a surprise raid was also conducted on 14.8.04 by the officers of Munnar Forest Division.

(d) In the recent raid on 10.10.04, 2711 Kgs of sandalwood powder and 275 Kgs of sandalwood chips of an estimated value of Rs. 20.60 lakhs were seized from four units. These four units were subsequently sealed. Four offences were booked as O.R.14/2004, 15/2004, 17/2004 and 18/2004 regarding illicit collection and storing of the seized materials. In the earlier raid on 14.8.04, 24.90 Kgs of sandalwood oil and 1025 Kgs of sandalwood were seized from two units by the Divisional Forest Officer, Munnar.

(e) and (f) The matter is under investigation.